DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 829 EA 022 394

AUTHOR Saddlemire, Richard
TITLE How To Decrease School Bus Vandalism.
INSTITUTION National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
PUB DATE Oct 90
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT Tips for Principals; Oct 1990

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Bus Transportation; Discipline Policy; Discipline Problems; Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Role; *Prevention; Principals; *School Buses; School Policy; *School Vandalism; Student Participation

ABSTRACT

Suggestions for principals to decrease school bus vandalism are presented. Guidelines are offered for the improvement of bus conditions, reorganization of the transportation system, establishment of a bus driver training program, and student involvement in an antivandalism campaign. Cooperation and regular meetings between students, parents, drivers, and the community are emphasized. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SA

Tips for Principals from NASSP October 1990

How To Decrease School Bus Vandalism

ED324829

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Koerner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA022 394

SA

Tips for Principals from NASSP October 1990

How To Decrease School Bus Vandalism

School bus vandalism is a recurring problem for schools and school administrators. To work toward a solution, the principal should improve the condition of the buses, change the organization of the transportation system, improve bus driver training, and involve the students in an anti-vandalism campaign.

Administrators should pay special attention to increasing student participation in developing a solution and building a team of students, drivers, mechanics, and school officials who will work together to eliminate vandalism on the school buses.

First, the administrator must determine the nature of the damage. Is the problem spray paint, Magic Markers, sharp pencils, knives, cigarette burns, or all these and more? Knowing what is used to damage the buses helps the principal know what implements to look for and to talk about with students. Talking to the bus driver can also provide hints about who is responsible for the damage and when it occurred.

The principal should let students know that bus vandalism is an important problem. By talking to students on the bus, the principal may have a better idea of who the vandals are, because students often sit in approximately the same seats each day.

The principal must also determine the scope of the problem. Is the vandalism confined to a few buses or does it involve the whole fleet? The extent of the problem often dictates how the principal should respond.

If the problem is limited, the effort to correct the situation should only be directed at the damaged buses. If the destruction is widespread, the solution must be more comprehensive.

Maintaining and Organizing the Buses

In effective schools, the buildings are kept in good condition and repaired quickly when vandalism occurs. This principle should be applied to buses because their condition influences the behavior of students. Buses in disrepair invite vandalism.

When investigating the damage on buses, the principal should assess whether some of the damage may have existed before the students contributed to the problem. Buses with broken seat springs, worn shock absorbers, loose stitching or holes in the seats, peeling paint, and similar maladies tempt students to add their marks.

Buses kept in good repair discourage vandalism, so periodic inspections should be a routine measure. The personnel in the bus garage will take better care of the buses if the principal keeps in contact with them and personally inspects the buses. The mechanics must be recognized for their good work because they can contribute to the solution.

Improving the organization of the bus system can also reduce vandalism. Overcrowding provides students with a reason to strike back against the system they believe does not care about their discomfort. Long routes create more opportunity for students to damage the buses—partially because they are bored on these long trips. Uncovered bus stops, long waits for the bus, erratic schedules, and confusing routes can also upset students, prompting them to vent their anger on the buses.

Principals should keep a record of incidents of vandalism to see if they coincide with bad weather, holidays, or a particular sports season or school event. Planning the bus routes and rules to benefit the students—not just for the convenience of the drivers may also eliminate much of the damage to buses.

Training the Bus Drivers

Most districts train bus drivers to operate and maintain their buses, but few systems prepare them to deal with the students they transport.

The inability of bus drivers to interact positively with students while keeping them under control often contributes to vandalism. Establishing a training program to improve relations between drivers and students should be part of any bus program. This training program should emphasize safety, district rules and consequences for behavior on buses, the relationship of the drivers and the school administrators, and personal relations skills.

The goals of the program should be to help the drivers understand the limits of their responsibility and to help build rapport with and control of the students.

Reacting to Vandalism

Typical school responses to bus vandalism are to assign seats, take bus privileges away from the vandals, and threaten harsher measures if the damage continues.

EA 022 394

These punishments may reduce the problem, but often students react to the restrictions by becoming angry and causing more damage. While punishment is a legitimate reaction to improper behavior, it may not reduce vandalism.

Other ways to react to vandalism on buses are:

• *Progressive Schedule of Punishment.* Penalties for bus vandalism should become more severe if the act is repeated. The penalties must be related to the amount of damage. A repeat offender deserves more punishment than a person caught for the first time, and the punishment for a minor offense should be less severe than the punishment for a major infraction.

• *Neighborhood Meetings.* Principals should ask a parent to host a meeting in the neighborhood served by a vandalized bus. Parents who attend th eeting should be informed of the problem, and the ort should be enlisted to help eliminate the vandalis blem.

• *Parent Shadow.* When a student's behavior warrants termination of bus privileges, administrators may offer to let a parent ride the bus with the student for a period of time shorter than the proposed suspension of the bus service.

• *Bus Facility Tour and Talk.* Offenders should be required to tour the bus facility and talk to the workers who must repair the damage. Helping a student realize the consequences of vandalism may improve the student's attitude and behavior.

• *Bus Meeting.* The administrator should meet with all the student riders from a vandalized bus and seek their solutions to the problem, taking care to provide students with a chance to share their views. The principal should not harangue or threaten the students. This is a good solution if only one bus is involved.

• *Letter to Parents.* Immediately after an incident of vandalism, the principal should send a letter to all parents of students on that bus to outline the expected behavior and penalties for misbehavior on the bus and to enlist parental support by asking them to discuss these topics with their students.

Preventing Vandalism

Positive alternatives to eliminate vandalism are available and should be used. One alternative is to involve students by establishing a student bus council. This elected student government organization works to improve bus service for students and maintain a good environment on the buses.

The council members—one elected student representative from each bus—meet periodically throughout the year to bring student concerns about the bus service to the administration. This provides administrators with a chance to obtain student input about how to solve any problems. This new avenue of communication provides a real chance to eliminate the causes of vandalism.

An important element in the success of the bus council is to build trust between students and the administration. To do this, the principal must want to try to solve the problems introduced by the students. When students see improved service, they are more willing to act responsibly. And, once trust is established, students and school officials can work together.

Other alternatives are:

• *Publicized rules.* Bus behavior rules and consequences should be published in the student handbook and distributed to the students on the buses at the beginning of the year. They should also be posted on the bus.

• *Meetings for bus drivers.* At the beginning of the school year and at least once per quarter, the principal should meet with the bus drivers to hear their complaints, emphasize safety, and discuss positive treatment of students.

• *Random bus riding.* Administrators should encourage other administrators, teachers, and parents to ride buses at random. Random bus riding can help school officials realize where problems are developing and provides a chance to improve conditions before vandalism occurs.

• *Newsletter and parent meetings.* Bus behavior should be a recurring topic in school newsletters and parent meetings. Citing the cost of the vandalism is often a good way to enlist parental support.

• *Student meetings.* The principal should talk with students about their impression of the bus service. Attempts should be made to correct any problems that are identified.

• *Teacher support.* Principals should ask teachers to discuss and assign topics in class that deal with vandalism. Classroom objectives can be fulfilled using bus behavior as a focus.

• *Bus drivers award.* Bus drivers whom the students feel do a good job should be invited to eat lunch with students. The administrator should present the drivers with certificates and send a letter tc their supervisor to make them aware of the honor. Mechanics and other bus personnel should also be recognized and rewarded for a job well-done.

A variety of methods can solve the problem of bus vandalism, but no principal should attempt all of them at once. Each idea should be evaluated according to local conditions and the extent of the problem.

Written by Richard Saddlemire, principal of Curundu Junior High School, a Department of Defense School in Panama.

Tips for Principals *is a monthly publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. John A. Lammel, President; Timothy J. Dyer, Executive Director; Thomas F. Koerner, Associate Executive Director, Editorial Director; Carol A. Bruce, Associate Director of Publications; Patricia Lucas George, Editor; Jody Guarino, Publications Specialist; Lori Price, Assistant Publications Specialist.*